

European Transport Safety Council
Road Safety Performance Index Annual Conference and Award Ceremony 2025

**See
streetlights,
think 20.**

Across Wales, from 17th September,
if you see streetlights close together
you're probably on a 20mph road.

#ReadyFor20mph



Lessons from Wales

Introduction of a default
20mph speed on
restricted roads

Kaarina Ruta, Senior Policy Officer (Transport), Welsh Local
Government Association

20mph – a brief history

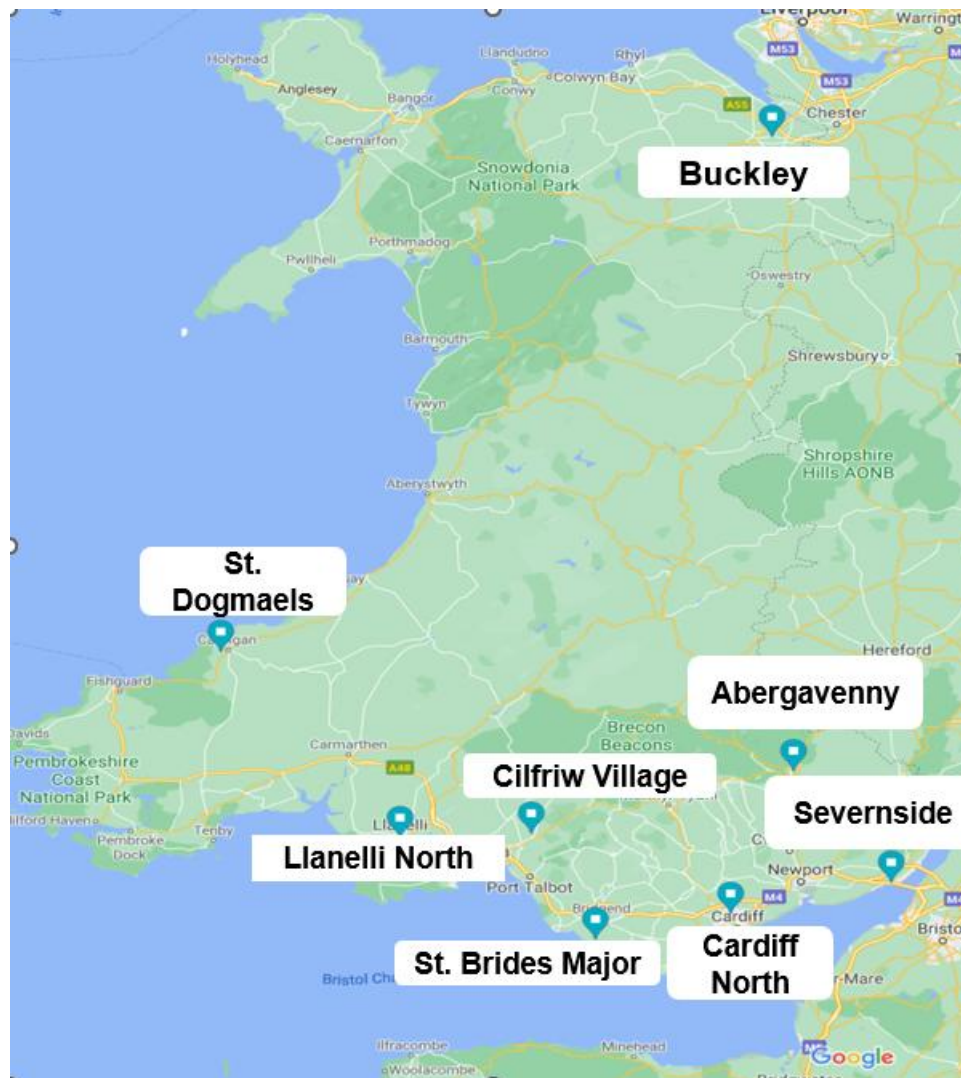
- 1935 Default speed limit on UK restricted roads becomes 30mph.
- 2017 Wales Act devolved the setting of national speed limits for restricted (lit) roads to the Welsh ministers.
- 2018 Debate held in Senedd (Welsh Parliament) tabled by Welsh Conservative members with cross party support from Welsh Labour, Plaid Cymru, Lib-Dems and Independents to "introduce legislation so that a 20mph speed limit becomes the standard speed limit in Welsh residential areas".
- 2020 Senedd votes in favour of changing to 20mph following Task Force Group report.
- 2021 Senedd general election – parties promising 20mph speed limit win majority of seats; public consultation.
- 2022 Senedd agrees legislation for the change.
- 2023 Welsh Conservative motion to repeal the legislation fails; new speed limit comes into force on 17 September.



Task Force Group and first phase settlements



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



8 areas

Mix of urban/rural

- An Enforcement Strategy
- Local communication toolkits
- Technical and Procedural Guidance
- An Exceptions Process for those roads to remain at 30 mph
- A Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

The legislation

WELSH STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2022 No. 800 (W. 177)

ROAD TRAFFIC, WALES

The Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022

Made

13 July 2022

Coming into force

17 September 2023

The Welsh Ministers, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 81(2) and (3) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984(1), and after consultation with the Secretary of State as required by section 81(5) of that Act, make the following Order.

A draft of this Order has been approved by a resolution of Senedd Cymru in accordance with section 81(3)(aa) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Title, application and commencement

- 1.—(1) The title of this Order is the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022.
- (2) This Order applies in relation to Wales.
- (3) This Order comes into force on 17 September 2023.



This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/setting-exceptions-20mph-default-speed-limit-restricted-roads-html> ([https://gov.wales/setting-exceptions-20mph-default-speed-limit-restricted-roads.html](https://gov.wales/setting-exceptions-20mph-default-speed-limit-restricted-roads-html)) for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

PUBLICATION

Setting exceptions to the 20mph default speed limit for restricted roads

How highway authorities can set exceptions to 20mph speed limits on restricted roads in Wales.

First published: 8 November 2022

Last updated: 8 November 2022

Publishing

LSH STATUTORY
INSTRUMENTS

2023 No. 783 (W. 124)

ROAD TRAFFIC, WALES

The Traffic Signs (Amendment)
(Wales) Regulations and General
Directions 2023

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Instrument)

This Instrument amends the Traffic Signs Regulations 2016 and the Traffic Signs General Directions 2016, together cited as the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 ("the 2016 Instrument"). These amendments are only relevant to Wales and are consequential on and supplementary to the Restricted Roads (20 mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022, which reduces the general speed limit for restricted roads from 30 mph to 20 mph in Wales from 17 September 2023. A reference in this note to a Schedule is to a Schedule to the 2016 Instrument.

Regulation 3 enables a new road safety plate to be used in addition to the signs which warn of children going to or from school or playground ahead, or of road humps. It also enables a sign for road humps to be accompanied by a plate warning of a traffic calmed area.

Regulation 4 amends the application of the signs used to notify of the entrance to and exit from a 20 mph zone so that they can no longer be used in Wales. As a consequence of the general speed limit for restricted roads being reduced from 30 mph to 20 mph in Wales, 20 mph zones will no longer be necessary and will therefore be abolished.

Regulation 5 enables two new signs to be used. One sign will be used to warn of the end of a traffic calmed area and the other to warn of a speed camera ahead and remind drivers of the 20 mph speed limit. The corresponding sign reminding drivers of the 30 mph speed limit will no longer apply to Wales to reflect the reduction in the general speed limit for restricted roads.

Implementation – early indications

- Very high awareness (but maybe not understanding)
- Good compliance without enforcement
- Poor knowledge of Highway Code, hence confusion for drivers
- Reluctance to enforce owing to vandalism
- Vitriolic debate on social media
- Spill-over into national (party) political debate
- 20mph became linked in political and media discourse to the so-called ‘war on motorists’



*'We're going to be late.
I'll get out, run ahead and
tell them you're on your way'*

Setting 30mph speed limits on restricted roads: guidance for highway authorities

Helps highway authorities decide where 20mph speed limits can increase to 30mph.

First published: 8 November 2022 Last updated: 16 July 2024

New guidance

- 20mph is suitable where people regularly mix with motorised traffic, including in built-up residential areas and near schools and hospitals.
- For main roads that serve as strategic routes, a 30mph limit can be set, provided it is safe to do so.

New criteria:

- **Movement:** Consider 30mph on strategic roads and low-demand minor roads.
- **Road Characteristics:** Assess segregated facilities and road geometry for safe higher speeds.
- Provides a framework to support highway authorities to make balanced decisions (higher speeds against potential risks).



Benefits of 30mph Speed Limit

e.g.

*Importance of the route
Journey time savings
Better bus services*

Disbenefits of 30mph Speed Limit

e.g.

*More collisions and casualties
Less active travel
Effects on communities*

Monitoring & Evaluation

Figure 1: Objectives of default 20mph speed limit implementation

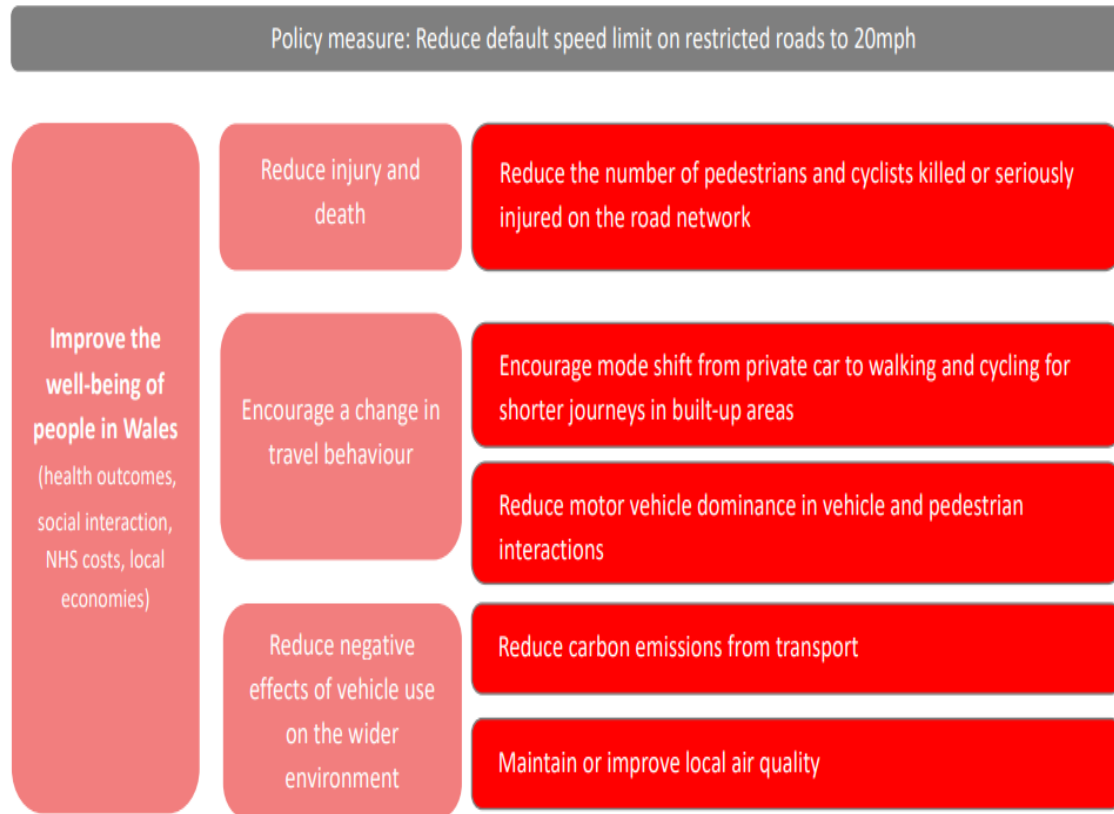
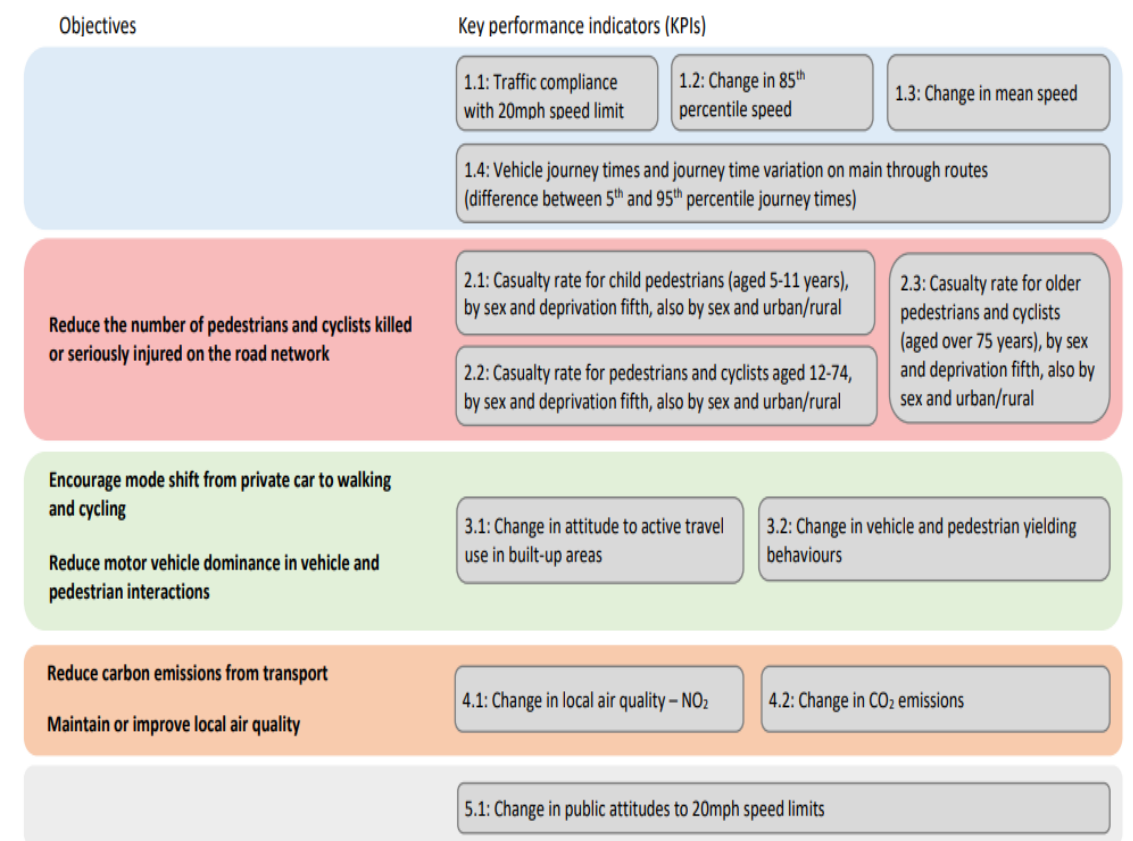


Figure 2: KPIs for assessing the effects of the default 20mph speed limit implementation



Speed monitoring

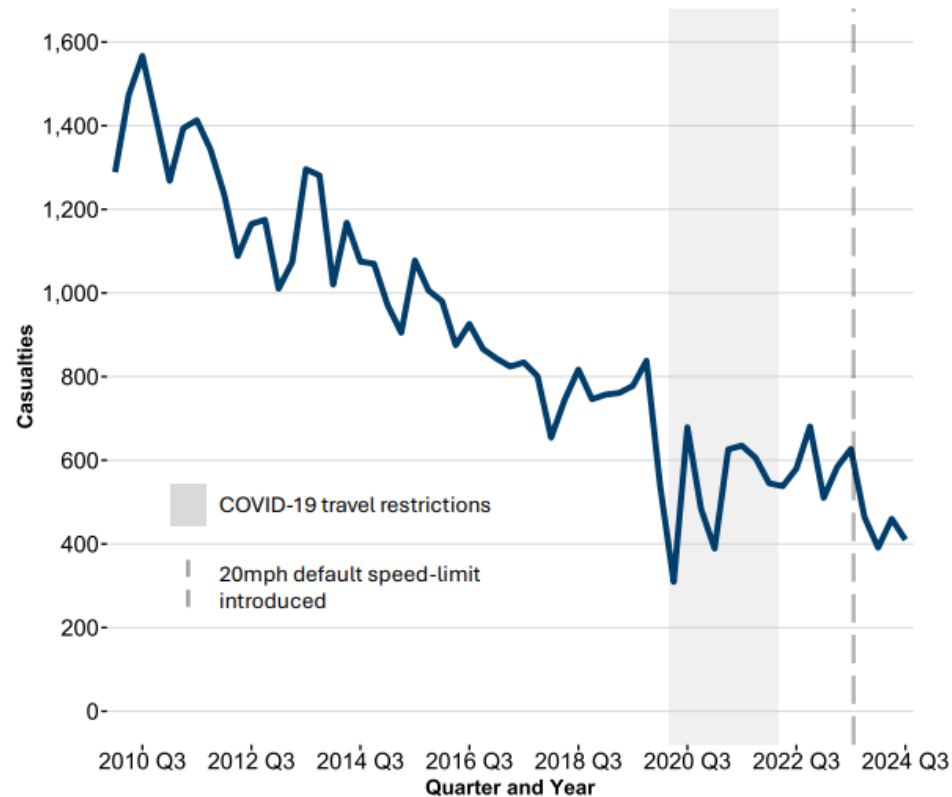
Table 1: KPI assessment

Key Performance Indicator	Summer 2023	Winter 2023/24	Summer 2024	Winter 2024/25
Percentage travelling at or below 24mph	20.8%	58.7%	52.7%	54.0%
Weighted 85th percentile speed (mph)	32.9	29.1	29.8	29.5
Weighted mean speed (mph)	28.7	24.4	25.1	24.9



Casualty statistics

Figure 4: Quarterly casualties reported on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit in Wales, 2010 Q1 to 2024 Q3



Source: Road collision statistics, Welsh Government

- The number of **casualties** on roads with 20 and 30mph road speed limits (combined) in 2024 Q3 was the lowest quarter 3 figures in Wales since records began
- During the 12-month period from 2023 Q4 to 2024 Q3, the number of casualties on 20 and 30mph roads (combined) is 28% lower than the same period a year before.
- There were 398 people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on roads with 20mph and 30mph road speed limits in the 12-month period after the introduction of the 20mph default speed limit.
- This is around 100 fewer people killed or seriously injured on roads, compared to the same period a year before.
- This was the lowest number of killed or seriously injured casualties on roads in Wales, for a year ending Q3, since records began.

Latest data – 21st of May 2025

- Road collisions in 2024 decreased by 10.7% from 2023, the third largest annual decrease on record.
- During 2024, police reported road collisions resulted in 3,993 casualties, the lowest figure recorded apart from 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic).
- In 2024, there were 1,441 road collisions on 20 and 30mph road speed limits (combined), the lowest figure since records began. This was a decrease of 19% from 2023, the largest annual fall apart from 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic).
- These collisions on 20 and 30mph road speed limits (combined), resulted in 1,751 casualties, the lowest figure recorded since records began. This was a 20% decrease from the previous year, the largest annual fall apart from 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Lessons learnt

- Clear Goals and planning
- Adequate resources
- Strong partnerships with stakeholders
- Communication is important but so is engagement
- Learning from the pilots
- Multi-agency endorsement
- Fostering behaviour change - how we use our roads and spaces, shifting away from the convenience of private cars toward healthier, more sustainable ways of living in our communities.

